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On Dysentery.

[No 89.]
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By Isaac Reall of New Jersey

passed April 1. 1816

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No disease perhaps to which the human system is subject is more distressing in its effects, and delirious in its nature than dysentery; it therefore becomes a subject of importance to ascertain in what it consists and the various forms in which it appears to ensure success in its treatment. It is a disease consisting, like all others in the confused and irregular operations of disordered and debilitated nature."

Dysentery occurs more or less every autumn either in sporadic cases or as an epidemic, and always comes on with great morbid action, which soon convinces the seat of the disease to be in the bowels. It appears in all the forms of fever from the highest to the lowest grade, but in a large majority of cases

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it puts on the inflammatory diathesis; It is preceded ^{by} ~~with~~ a rigor or chill like an intermittent, succeeded by fever and all the train of symptoms that characterize an acute disease, such as headache, nausea, sickness at the stomach, and vomiting; — the belly costive and flatulent; the pulse full, frequent and strong, and imparts to the patient a jerking motion; it varies in frequency from sixty to one hundred strokes or more in the minute.

The late Professor Dr. Baile, says that the matter thrown out of the stomach is of a mucous nature and sometimes tinged with some blood.

Dysentery does not uniformly come on with this regular course of symptoms, but appears differently in different persons, in different seasons and in the same person at different times; In some, fever appears to be the first symptom; in others a simple loosening of the bowels with mucous stools, and again, in others, it comes on with gripping pains in the bowels, with frequent bloody discharges, and tenesmus.

The Dysentery begins, if I may be allowed to judge,

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fully much as the great Sydenham has observed, with cold shiverings, succeeded by heat, and other febrile symptoms; but in other cases these feverish symptoms are not felt, or at least they are apparently not felt, but a griping and twisting of the bowels, or stitches in the side, with a constant fruitless straining at stool, — ~~Bruit~~ ^{and that} ~~little~~ discharge is so thin and acid as to wash off the mucus from the bowels, and excite their membrane, and bring on bloody discharges. The anus becomes inflamed, very tender and sore.

Cases occur in which the bowels become suffocated with excitement to such a degree as to refuse to act upon their contents; The liver refuses to secrete bile, and of course there can be no stools. Under these circumstances patients suffer considerably from the irritating matter contained in the bowels; it keeps up a constant fever and renders the patient restless. The natural excrements are seldom voided except after taking a drastic purge which carries them out; they appear in hardened balls of different sizes.

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The syphala appear to be joined, in the cells of the colon of a firm texture, where they remain most probably from the commencement of the complaint.

It was said by the late Dr. Boerhaave, that worms sometimes accompany dysentery; when lecturing on this disease, he spoke of this with great emphasis and enjoined upon the claps the free use of calomel whenever their presence was suspected.

In whatever way the disease begins, the symptoms are pretty nearly the same, and I yield to the same remedies. The disposition to evacuate the bowels becomes more frequent and urgent as the disease advances, but when indulged, there is little else voided, than a watery or slimy matter tinged with blood. If the bowels become ulcerated the discharges have a sanious appearance, with an intolerable pain. Dysentery neglected in its first stage often becomes obstinate and sometimes chronic; the stomach and bowels are weakened from the concentration of morbid excitement upon them; in fact the whole

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alimentary canal becomes so depressed, that when food is taken into the stomach, it passes apparently directly through the intestinal tube seemingly little changed, and what appears remarkable, is that the action takes on a constituting action when the food has got no farther than just into the stomach; the appetite in general is very much increased or lost, but sometimes morbidly increased.

I generally appear to be the same disease under all circumstances of its occurrence, except in the degree of violence; which, as in other diseases, varies with the season, the constitution of the patient, and the degree of exposure to the exciting causes. The liver is manifestly inflamed; it is in some instances, and in others of an intermittent type, and observes a diurnal or tertian period.

Another form of this disease is to be taken notice of and that is the typhus. It may be the primary form or it may from neglect degenerate in this low state of excitement; in either of which cases it is the

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In this prostrated state of the system all the principal
evacuants are withheld, and ^{the disease} must be treated exclusively
with stimuli and tonics; if the bowels be very open
with a considerable flux of blood much danger
is to be apprehended. Care must be taken to
prevent "the life of the patient from running
off by his bowels." To effect this an immediate
clench must be put to the fibres in the bowels
kept rather in a castor state. In cases of great
debility, patients are uniformly to be seen lying on
their backs and continue in this position as long
as great prostration of strength exists.

The pulse is more variable in this form ~~of the disease~~
than in any other, in which ~~it~~ ^{the} disease
ever appears; it beats from forty to one hundred
and fifty strokes the minute; in some it is full
and round; in others small and soft, and in almost
every case yielding readily to pressure. The eyes are wild
and staring; the tongue and fauces are covered with
a dark black crust, and the forehead smooth & polished.

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Scorbuty is most uncommonly to occur in childhood and old age. It now and then prevails epidemically among children, at other times among the aged, and apparently selecting no one else (at least in the same way) and proves speedily mortal if the patient be not rescued from the primary state in the primary state of the disease; at other times it spreads indiscriminately and spreads with much mortality.

It is more frequent in the country than in cities owing to the less stimulating diet of the former, whilst that of the latter being of a more stimulating and tonic nature, renders the bowels less liable to be acted on. It occurs particularly at the fruit season owing to the debilitating nature of that rapid aliment.

Persons who have been in the habit of living upon salt meat and other provision of the same stimulating nature are more liable to the disease, when confined exclusively to rest, than those who live indiscriminately upon both; if the latter be a little tainted it prepares

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The exciting causes of insanity are various, and set
with a force according to circumstances; but I will
only mention a few of them. These are distresses of state,
distresses of life, but in moderate exerting with cold,
exposure to night dews, &c. the nervous system have
sluggishness, faints, &c. in the brain's power, as in wet weather
the mind is affected, and but these are a temporary state
of it. I never saw any an epidemic action of the nervous
system, and in a few cases in the same place.

Respects the application of the mind to the body, as in
the much heated state of the mind, frequent causes of the
disease.

In the British state the situation of the mind
the increasing more or high education than in some places,
where violent passions rule, and the nervous system
although, it is not clear when the nervous system is not
in the state. The nervous system is a sensitive system,
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Dysentery is so strongly marked and so closely allied to the various Intermittent fever that they appear to be the same disease; and Position there is so, and consists in the same marked excitement affecting only in the symptoms of the heat increasing it is sometimes into an insupportable appearance after the various Intermittent fever has ceased: the former more to the throne and more in extension of the latter.

The greater heat of dysentery in tropical climates, owing to the cooler air in these places, which is its hospitalization, produces what Eschschkum has called the fever of the season - borne in upon the bowels, but which is more harshly denominated by Dr. B. Rush the intestinal state of fever.

When after the first clearing, vomiting and purging, the patient be not relieved, but evidently sinks; there is great danger to be apprehended of a fatal issue. The pulse becomes weak and tremulous, the countenance falls; the patient complains of increasing pain in the bowels, all

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and gnashes his teeth; the mouth becomes dry and parched; the throat sore, the wrists and ankles cold and the whole body covered with cold sweat; deliriums come on and end the tragedy.

Dissections have proved to us that the intestines suffer very much from inflammation. They become thickened and ulcerated. Abscesses have been seen upon them. The liver and spleen have likewise been found much disordered. The liver Dr G. S. Barton observes has been found indurated, and soft. In some instances abscesses have been ~~seen~~ seen.

Dr Elphinstone, in his excellent lecture on Sympathy, observes, that the spleen is sometimes tubercled, the gall bladder filled with dark bile, and the great intestine entirely mortified, or partly inflamed, partly mortified, the colon being most affected. The colon remains longer diseased than the smaller intestines, and the colon is generally the last part that recovers. The disease being chronic in its first parts, accounts for the great mischief produced. —

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I shall, in a very cursory manner mention the appearance
 of the blood drawn in this disease. It varies in its appea-
 rance in the same person in different stages of the system,
 as also in different persons. The colour of the blood rather
 in its appearance, than a look to its consistence. This
 change takes place upon the following veins; the
 blood, when, in inflammatory cases, presents a jerking
 motion. In some cases it assumes a fawn or pink
 = tawnyish. The blood in drawn in the first stage of the
 disease. It differs very much in its appearance from
 that taken in the latter stage. The blood first drawn
 will put on the inflammation long crust, the serum
 will not; the serum is almost invisible in some, and in
 others is a dark apple green; in some an easier to be
 with blood let from a vein in the very heart of the
 disease, strongly cups, and flows on the face it acquires
 surface is, rather a pale with the white that resembles
 and drops upon a cabbage leaf. The appearance of
 this fluid in the blood may be attributed to the violent
 febrile action in the system, producing the violent heat

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The treatment is pretty nearly the same in all cases of dysentery, but must be varied according to the state of the system. I shall not mention all the remedies that might be used, in which may be named in the various methods, but those only that appear to be most successful in their operation in the system, and best adapted to effect a cure.

In a majority of cases the salutary remedies are found to answer best, and are most efficacious. Accordingly the first, most important and important of all others is bloodletting. In every case where the pulse is just hard or tense, the lancet ought to be judiciously used, especially when the disease depends upon a tension state of air, and be not satisfied with a single bleeding, but repeat it as often as the system may require it, it proves death. In contraindications in the viscera alter the, even, induce him, promote his nutrition, and purgatives the system in the reception of other appropriate remedies. In some cases when

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There is great civil action, vomiting is brought on by the eyes or a few ounces of blood. Patients sometimes vomit most copiously while the blood is streaming from the nose.

Emetics. These are very beneficial after bleeding. In every case where ^{there} is much sickness at stomach or even nausea; it is right and proper to employ them. They excite the stomach to revulse its ill contents, and throw them out of the system; after which all the bad symptoms will disappear. Sarsaparilla, doses of Rhubarb, which will be found of singular service.

Catharticks. Those who emetics should never be used till after bleeding, if the state of the system require it. If the disease be rather mild, lenient purges will answer best, such as castor oil, olive oil, and above all sulphur; if the disease be more violent, the more powerful purges must be employed, as rhubarb, jalap and calomel. If there be much bile, and the patient complains of great pain; calomel combined with a little opium; this answers a three fold purpose; it mitigates pain, evacuates the

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bowels and excites a morbid salivation, which is very
 decisive in those cases which have a tendency to Syphilis.
 Cathartics, some conceived have become too popular a remedy
 in dysentery; they are administered indiscriminately, as
 up to the state of the system, and do a great deal of
 mischief. They ought at no time to be exhibited too
 frequently or excluded too far. When the stools are
 very solid and tolerable, it will be found of service
 to purge with Sweet-hew & Castor combined.

The very obstinate case Mercury is to be resorted to as a
 decisive remedy, particularly in chronic cases. It must
 be given in small doses for the purpose of salivation.
 Blisters, these are also found eminently useful, and
 may be applied to every part of the body; they act by
 insulating morbid excitement to the skin.

The warm bath impregnated with Oak-bark is particularly
 beneficial in chronic cases.

Dysentery some times observes periodical returns; in those
 cases R. Bark and *Sorfulentaria virginiana*, are to be given

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either in powder or decoction with a liberal hand, in the intervals of the paroxysms.

✓ Tenismus must ^{be} managed by the injections of liquid laudanum, lime water, sweet oil, Gum Arabic &c.

After the fever is principally overcome, the sickness and griping relieved, and the bowels cleansed; opistals may be exhibited with advantage; they may be given five or six times a day in small doses, and larger ones at bed time. Spasmodica combined with opium in doses of two grains of the former and one of the latter every two hours, if the stomach will bear it; this formula not only restrains the flux, and mitigates pain; but
✓ also imparts strength to the bowels and determines the fluids to the surface; which is very desirable.

Diluent & demulcent drinks are fine palliative remedies and ought never to be neglected. They blunt the acrimony in the elementary canal, and supply the place of mucus to the inflamed bowels. The principal drinks are, rice or barley water, toast and water, linseed tea or a decoction of starch, gum Arabic &c; these drinks are to be seasoned and made agreeable by adding a little cinnamon water, or sugar.

The diet in dysentery should be light and sparing according to circumstances; it should be regulated by the state of the system.

It should principally consist of rice, sago, arrow-root, barley gruel, panada, and toasted wheat bread and water made agreeable by adding a little molasses or sugar.

The best mode of treating by this dysentery that I am acquainted with is, to excite a salivation as soon as possible and support the strength of the patient by stimuli and tonics. The most efficacious of these are *colicini whey*; it may be given from the commencement of the disease in as large doses as the stomach will bear.

Dover's powder may be exhibited every two hours. Blister must be applied in the first state of the disease; fomentations on the lower extremities and sinapisms to the feet &c. *Campdor*, *Chum* & *Opeacuanha* form a powder of considerable efficacy; the formula is ℥ss of the former and one of each of the latter; to be taken five or six times a day or oftener if the state of the case may demand it.

The painful and extremely unpleasant nature of
this formidable disease justifies and demands
every endeavour to obstruct its violence and termi-
nate its influence. The venerable professors of the
University of Pennsylvania have employed
their genius, reading and observation for the
purpose of assisting their assiduous pupils to
beat it with success. May their endeavours long
and eminently contribute to diminish the
diseases of suffering humanity. ~